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TOP SECRET

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6 July 1966

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

HO CHI MINH'S CLANDESTINE TRIP TO CHINA

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
6 July 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

Ho Chi Minh's Clandestine Trip to China

1. A good case can be made that Ho Chi Minh took a clandestine trip to Peking, probably in mid or late May. It is doubtful, however, that he has made a second such trip in recent weeks, as reported in the Western press.

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4. There is no hint as to when Ho returned from his trip to China, if he did make such a trip, and no indication that he has made another such trip. It seems unlikely that Ho would undertake two such trips within the span of six weeks. He is not a man to dash about involving himself personally in talks

*Prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence

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with his allies. He prefers to remain somewhat aloof, dispatching his top lieutenants to perform such duties instead. One measure of this aspect of Ho's personality is the fact that his last known trip outside North Vietnam was in 1961, and that was to attend the 22nd Soviet party congress.

5. The implication in the press reports of Ho's second trip to Peking is that we may soon see North Vietnam moving toward a negotiated settlement of the war. All the available intelligence, however, suggests that, for the present, Hanoi remains determined to pursue the war. The infiltration of North Vietnamese military personnel into South Vietnam this year is higher than ever and apparently is continuing at a high rate. There was no indication

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that Hanoi was willing to lower its demands for a settlement of the war. Recent public statements by Hanoi officials certainly indicate no change in their determination to continue the war.

6. This is not to deny that the cumulative effect of US air strikes on North Vietnam, plus the recent US/GVN successes on the ground in South Vietnam, have probably caused the Hanoi leadership to take a more sober view of their prospects. The air strikes in North Vietnam are causing the Hanoi regime increasing difficulty, particularly in keeping open its transportation routes. This, in turn, has hampered Hanoi's efforts to supply its bomb damage repair teams, areas of chronic food shortage, and its troops in South Vietnam. Moreover, the continuing air strikes have doubtless begun to have a negative effect upon popular morale, although the extent of this deterioration is difficult to assess. It is likely, however, that the North Vietnamese reaction to this situation has been to request more aid from Peking rather than to seek Chinese acquiescence in a move toward a political settlement of the war.

7. Ho's suspected trip to Peking in May might be explained by a combination of factors which led him to feel that his personal effort was required to gain reassurance that there would be no slackening of Chinese material support for North Vietnam. Ho is also undoubtedly concerned over the implications

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for Vietnam of the internal party strife in China and over recent statements by Chinese leaders to the effect that no real Communist can remain neutral in the battle against "modern revisionism." It has long been Ho's position that North Vietnam must have aid from both Peking and Moscow if it is to successfully wage its war. Any threat, even an oblique one, that the Chinese might attempt to pressure Hanoi into backing away from its close relationship with Moscow could draw a major reaction from the North Vietnamese, such as a visit by Ho to the Chinese leadership.

8. Peking, for its part, wants the fighting to drag on, and any approach by Ho indicating a desire to damp down hostilities and seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam would provoke a strong Chinese reaction. Peking regards the Vietnam war as an arena where US military strength can be tied down and punished. The Chinese, moreover, have publicly asserted and probably believe that time is on the Communist side, and that the US, even if not defeated in the field, will eventually lose heart and withdraw. Peking would almost certainly urge upon Ho the necessity for continuing the war.

9. The Chinese would insist that any modification of the Communist negotiating position would only encourage the US to hold to its terms for a settlement. They would assert that the US could not be trusted to abide by any compromise solution and would resume the war at a later date under conditions less favorable for Hanoi. Finally, they would urge that any appearance of Communist weakening would encourage Saigon and strengthen South Vietnamese determination to fight on against the Viet Cong.

10. To reinforce these arguments the Chinese, if pressed, would probably offer to increase their logistic support of Hanoi. Peking, however, has emphasized that the Vietnamese must carry the primary responsibility for continuing the war, and the Chinese are unlikely to suggest direct military involvement by Peking as an inducement to persuade the Vietnamese to hold to their present terms for a settlement.

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